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(54) Television signals receiver implementing an electronic guide method of the available television programs

(57) A television signals receiver is described, comprising:

- at least a tuner device for tuning upon choice one from the various television broadcasting stations receivable,
- a decoder for receiving and decoding the digital signals inserted, during the vertical flyback periods, in the received television signal,
- a central unit of control and digital processing, connected to the decoder also for analysing the received and decoded digital signals,
- command means for allowing the user to send operative commands to said central unit,
- a first non volatile digital memory for storing data, within which it is possible to store the tuning coordinates of a plurality of broadcasting stations, tying every broadcasting station with a "tuning program number" and
- a second non volatile digital memory for storing operative instructions for the said central unit,

said receiver also comprising or being associated to:

- an image display device,
- a device for recording television programs,

characterised in that said second memory contains instructions for causing said central unit to carry out a method of processing the said digital signals according to the following steps:

a) upon verifying a determined event the said tuner is commanded to tune into a first receivable broad-

casting station,

b) the relative received television signal is examined and it is determined whether it contains digital signals inserted in the vertical flyback periods of the teletext type,

c) in the affirmative case the digital signal of the teletext type is analysed and it is determined whether in said signal a special page is available, identified by a predetermined code, within which information is contained for identifying the pages which contain standardised information on television programs,

d) in the affirmative case said pages are examined and the data contained in such is stored,

e) the tuner is commanded to tune into a second receivable broadcasting station, and the previous steps b, c, d are repeated, therefore the tuner is commanded to tune into a third broadcasting station and so up till completion of all the receivable broadcasting stations available, or rather of all the broadcasting stations tied to a tuning program number,

f) the information stored in this way, relative to the television programs provided by the broadcasting stations scanned according to the previous steps are analysed and classified, and

g) the receiver is pre-set to display on said display device, every time that a determined first key or button comprised in said command means is pressed, in particular said key or button which also serves to recall the receiver from the stand-by condition, a list of television programs made available by said broadcasting stations, listing them in order beside the relative tuning program numbers, the co-ordi-

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rates of which have been stored as mentioned above.

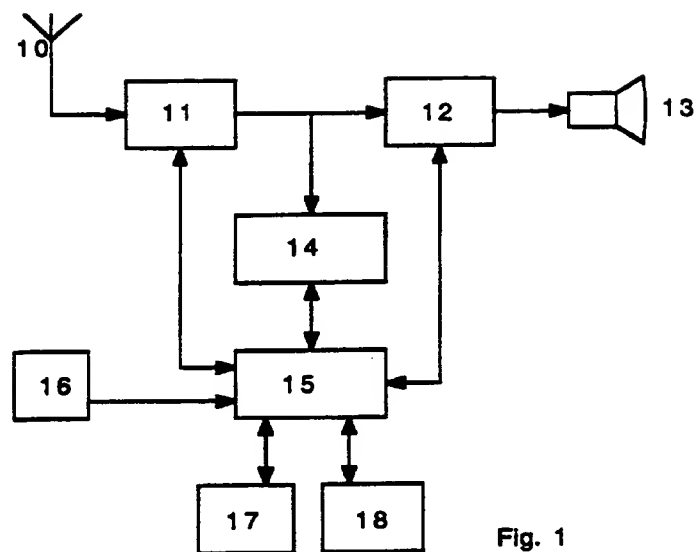


Fig. 1

Description

The present invention refers to a television signals receiver, comprising:

- at least a tuner device for tuning upon choice one from the various television stations receivable,
- a decoder for receiving and decoding the digital signals inserted, during vertical flyback periods, in the received television signal,
- a central unit of control and digital processing, connected to the decoder also for analysing the received and decoded digital signals,
- command means for allowing the user to send operative commands to said central unit,
- a first non volatile digital memory for storing data, within which it is possible to store the tuning coordinates of a plurality of broadcasting stations, tying every station with a "tuning program number" and
- a second non volatile digital memory for storing operative instructions for the said central unit,

said receiver also comprising or being associated to:

- an image display device,
- a device for recording television programs.

Television signals receivers of the type described are known; for instance from European patent application N° 0 438 185.

The technical problem being the basis of the present invention is the following.

An ever increasing number of television broadcasting stations is taking place: be it those of the traditional type, via satellite, via cable and so on; the user has difficulty in being informed of all the programs being offered.

The traditional means of information, newspapers and magazines, are often not kept up to date (for instance due to subsequent variations in the programming) e therefore become difficult to consult.

Such difficulties have brought the distributing companies of cable or satellite transmissions to study the possibility of the so-called electronic program guides (note for instance the American patent application US 5 473 609 or the Japanese patent application JP 07 298 245 which provide for the transmission, next to the actual programs, of informative signals on the programs themselves).

On the other hand the broadcasting stations that also transmit teletext signals usually provide, in appropriate pages, the transmission of lists of the available programs for the current and/or successive days.

With this in mind see the Japanese patent application JP 07 193 756 which provides for the possibility of choosing the program by way of a mobile cursor on such teletext pages.

It has also been proposed, by way of program

broadcasting associations (EBU) and by receiver producers (EACEM), to standardise the information relative to television programs (E.P.G. system), so as to make it possible for receivers to supply users with better, more exact and easier information on actual programs. Such a system provides for sending said information during some lines of the vertical flyback, which are different from those that normally carry teletext or Datacast information. However even though the structure of such data is organised in the same way as the teletext data, in the following, for simplicity, the diction 'teletext' shall be used in order to indicate the coded digital data which carries the EPG information.

The aim of the present invention is that of indicating how it is possible to manufacture a television signals receiver able to help the user in a simple and practical way, not only by indicating the programs which can be chosen, but facilitating the user to the maximum with this task.

In order to reach such aims the subject of the present invention is a television signals receiver having the characteristics being principally described in the first claim.

Further improvements of the invention are described in the sub-claims.

It is to be noted that all the characteristics described in the enclosed claims and sub-claims are an integral part of the present description.

Further characteristics and advantages of the present invention shall result in being clear from the following description and annexed drawings, supplied purely as an explanatory and non limiting example, wherein:

- figure 1 represents a simplified block diagram of a television signals receiver according to the invention;
- figure 2 represents the block diagram of a significant part of the logic flow according to the invention of the central unit of the receiver of fig. 1;
- figure 3 represents the block diagram of a second significant part of the logic flow according to the invention of the central unit of the receiver of fig. 1;
- figure 4 represents the key board of a remote control unit for the signals receiver according to the invention;
- figure 5 represents an example of a list of programs that can be displayed by the receiver of signals according to the invention.

The standardised information relative to television programs can be contained in a plurality of teletext type pages; one of these pages contains the index (directory) of the other pages that contain the information relative to the television programs.

This index page is identified by a special and defined page number (code); for instance this number contains at least a number being greater than 9. Exam-

ples of numbers of this type are 1A0 or C00.

The decoder of the receiver according to the invention (that can obviously be either a television set, a video recorder, or a simple tuner-amplifier, such as those used for satellite receivers) is programmed to search for such index page; from which it obtains the numbers of the pages containing information on programs; this information is expressed in a standardised manner, so as that the decoder can without difficulty obtain all the data that it needs.

The decoder reads the pages of interest, stores the data and with such data is able to create a menu to be produced on a display screen.

Such menu can be stored every time that a determined key is pressed (key M, figure 4); inasmuch the key in question in a preferred solution is also able to recall the receiver from the stand-by condition, so that the display of the menu is automatically effected when the receiver is recalled from stand-by.

It is in fact better to always leave the receiver in stand-by, but not completely switched off; in this way it can automatically explore all the receivable broadcasting stations and store the data on the programs, in a way so as to be ready, as soon as recalled to the normal functioning, to display the menu of programs.

Naturally such operation of exploring, analysis and memorising is carried out by the receiver immediately after the switching on and then periodically repeated at predetermined intervals, for instance every hour, so as to update the memory.

Being as that the acquisition times of the pages containing the information on the programs is rather long, it is advantageous that the central unit of control and processing (15) be programmed in such a way to provide for updating the memory only with data relative to television programs of the broadcasting stations, the coordinates of which have been stored in said first memory (17), repeating the operations as mentioned in claim 1 at relatively brief determined intervals of times, for instance every hour, either when the receiver is in the stand-by condition, or when it is in its normal functioning condition.

It is also advantageous that the said central unit (15) be on the other hand programmed to update the memory with data relative to television programs relative to all the receivable broadcasting stations, at relatively long determined intervals of time, for instance once a day. In the case a station not yet present in the memory of "programs" is tuned into, the central unit provides for storing it and assigning it a "tuning program number" to which the data of programs obtained from the teletext pages transmitted by the said transmitting station can be associated.

In order to facilitate this updating function, the receiver can advantageously be equipped with more than one tuner, so as to be able to update the memory even during the display of a program or its recording; the other tuner (or tuners) also allows for the display of

a program and, simultaneously, the recording of another.

The base menu can advantageously contain the programs being transmitted at the moment of recall from "stand-by", i.e. those of which the beginning is previous, and the end is successive, to the time of display of the menu.

The menu can advantageously be constituted by at least 9 lines, each containing a program; in the heading of the menu, on the first line, the date and current hour will be indicated.

Every line can contain from left to right:

- the "tuning program number", i.e. the number associated by the user to the program and stored in the broadcasting stations memory of the receiver;
- the beginning time;
- the end time;
- the title of the program.

An example of a program list, representing the programs on show during a normal evening in England, is represented in figure 5.

The "tuning numbers" illustrated in figure 5 correspond to the following broadcasting stations:

1=BBC 1; 2=BBC 2; 3=ITV; 4=CHANNEL 4;
5=MOVIE CHANNEL; 6=SKY MOVIES; 7=SKY SPORTS; 8=SKY ONE; 9=EURO SPORT.

There is nothing to prohibit that for each line of programs, associated to "tuning numbers", also the broadcasting stations be indicated: key 1=BBC 1, key 2=BBC 2, and so on.

To the left of the "tuning program number" a cursor can advantageously be displayed (for instance a flashing square or an arrow) for indicating the selected program; as an alternative rather than the cursor the "tuning program number" itself can flash or the whole line; or the selected line can be displayed in a different colour than the others, for instance red.

The line can also be displayed in a different colour according to the type of program; for instance, see figure 5, the following colours can be used:

- film, red;
- sport, yellow;
- news, white
- others (documentaries, variety, etc.), green.

As an alternative, the type of program can be indicated, after the title of the program, by clear or abbreviated writing (film, sport, news, various; or F, S, N, V).

In this very simple way the user has the availability, upon the moment of switching on the apparatus, of the situation of the programs in that moment; the user can select the program that he prefers from the menu, moving the cursor on the line (i.e. on the program) desired

by way of two keys distinguished with an upward pointing arrow and a downward pointing arrow (\uparrow , \downarrow ; see figure 4).

By pressing the P key the relative program is tuned and displayed; it is also possible to provide for that once, on the menu of current programs, a determined program has been selected and that such selection is not changed for a determined time (for instance 3 seconds), the receiver automatically provides for tuning and displaying the program without the necessity of pressing P key.

At this point the user with the two keys, upward arrow-downward arrow, can change program in the normal way, as usual with a television set.

If the M key is pressed, the previously described base menu re-appears; with the key distinguished with the right pointing arrow (\rightarrow) the menu of the successive programs respect those of the base menu is shown (i.e. programs that have not yet started); the left pointing arrow (\leftarrow) returns to the previous menu.

During the normal television reception on the other hand such keys (\leftarrow , \rightarrow) can be used in the normal way for making adjustments to the volume.

If the P key is pressed when a particular program of a future menu is displayed, the receiver is programmed to switch on to the selected program at the time in which the program begins, with a suitable anticipation, for instance 5 minutes before it starts. If, during the same conditions of a menu relating to future transmissions, the R key is pressed the receiver is programmed to record the selected program; the receiver could eventually switch itself on even 5 minutes before the starting time of the program and provide to record the selected program, switching itself off for instance 10 minutes after the time of the programs end.

If the V.P.S. code is present in the selected program, the microprocessor of the central control unit 15 uses the relevant information in order to record only the desired program, without the need of starting the recording in advance and to finish it in delay.

The remaining two keys of figure 5 are usually "stand-by" and audio "muting" keys.

When the menu is displayed, in a preferred version of the invention, the audio is mute.

In the menu, if the receiver does not have, in its memory, data concerning a program relative to a determined broadcasting station, the corresponding line of the menu will be empty or will carry an indication of the type "Data not available".

As can be seen from a remote control having only 9 keys, the television receiver according to the invention allows, with the maximum ease, the user to choose in a moment the preferred program from those available or to program in advance its vision or recording; the ease of use of the receiver according to the invention is such that even instructions for its use do not seem necessary.

In case a very long program is forecasted, which may be interrupted for transmitting a different program,

this fact can also be signalled in the menu. For instance a film may be divided in two halves and a news bulletin may be transmitted in between; or a so called "container program" may contain different items. Any item could be identified separately in the menu. In this case it is also possible that the user can decide whether he or she wants that the selected "container" program remains selected until the final end or until the interruption. For example double pressing of the M key (or the P key or the R key) could mean that the final end of the selected program has to be waited for.

It is also clear that the receiver according to the invention can also supply more sophisticated applications; in fact the data stored relative to the transmission of programs can be processed by the control unit of the receiver in such a way so as to create a real and proper database with which it would then be possible to search and view, or to program, for instance, all the transmissions relating to sport, or all the films and so on.

In this more elaborate version of the invention, the keyboard of the remote control would also be appropriately equipped with numeric keys 1-9.

In figure 1, in which the simplified block diagram of the television signals receiver is represented, reference number 10 indicates the receiving antenna, 11 indicates a conventional tuner and amplifier of television signals, which we can suppose by way of example is of the frequency synthesis type comprising an intermediate frequency amplifier and the video detector.

Reference number 12 indicates, in the same figure, the circuit block, also conventional, comprising the amplifier of the video signals; the reference number 13 indicates the image display device, which we may suppose as being of the conventional type (cathode-ray tube being internal or external of the appliance). Reference number 14 indicates a teletext decoder, which provides for extracting the teletext signals from the video signal, said teletext signals being inserted in normal way in the interval of the vertical flyback periods; the decoder 14 also provides for, in the known way, decoding said teletext signals and for processing them so as to reconstruct the transmitted pages of text. The teletext decoder can be of a conventional type, modified, if necessary, in order to be able of handling pages having greater numbers than usual.

Reference number 15 indicates a central unit of control and digital processing (microprocessor), of the known type, which provides for the functional management of the television signals receiver.

Reference number 16 indicates a command generating means, that can be comprised for example of a known infrared rays remote control with a keyboard, and relative interface towards the central unit 15; reference number 17 indicates a read and write memory (RAM) of the non volatile type, for memorising the digital data; whereas reference number 18 indicates a read only non volatile memory (ROM) which contains the operative instructions for the central unit 15.

Moreover the central unit 15 provides more precisely to:

- receive and decode the commands input by the user on the command means 16;
- superintend the search and tuning of the signals, controlling the programmable frequency divider contained in the tuner 11;
- control the decoder 14, from which it receives the teletext signals possibly inserted in the received television signal;
- analyse the teletext signals received from the decoder 14, in particular extracting, as described, the pages relative to the television programs (which may be identified for instance by the hexadecimal code) and stored in the RAM memory 17;
- process the information contained in said stored pages and to store them once again in the memory 17 in a "data base" format, that is to say in the form of "normalised" records, each being relative to a determined television program and containing a series of fields, in which "key" data is found, in the form of text, for instance the title of the program, the type of program (news, film, sport, culture, cookery, and so on), date and starting time, duration, broadcasting station;
- search in the stored "data base" one or more desired records, based on a determined command sent by the user (for instance: search for all the programs for this afternoon that deal with sport) and display them reading the data in the memory and sending them to the video amplifier 12 so as to be displayed on the display 13.

In order to store all the teletext pages transmitted by the various broadcasting stations being relative to the programming of television programs the receiver has to periodically carry out, upon command or automatically, the following operations:

- explore all the receivable frequencies tuning into the broadcasting stations one after the other or only those associated to the memory of "tuning programs" (depending on whether it is a daily exploration or an hourly updating),
- for each broadcasting station tuned, to control whether it transmits teletext signals, and, in the affirmative case, acquire and store, after having identified them, all the pages relative to the programming of the transmissions;
- once all the pages relating to television programs have been stored, it organises the information in the form of a "data base" and then stores them under this format.

For the sake of simplicity the power supply circuits, the CRT deflection circuit and the circuits relative to the audio parts of the television are not indicated in figure 1

and are not mentioned, inasmuch they are not essential for the understanding of the invention.

In figure 2 the block diagram of a first significant part of the logic flow according to the invention of the central unit of the receiver of figure 1 is represented.

Such flow corresponds to a selected part of the operative instructions contained in the memory 18.

The block indicated with number 20 indicates the starting block of the logic flow relative to the functions of search and storing on the teletext pages information relative to the programming of television transmissions.

Control can reach block 20 in two ways; for example it can be provided that every time the receiver is switched on the control automatically passes to block 20; or the control can reach block 20 after the user has sent a determined command signal, or when the receiver is found to be in the stand-by condition at a time of an established day or every time that the receiver is placed in the stand-by condition.

It is clear that the described operations, if carried out in the stand-by condition, do not create disturbances or slow down the other functions that the receiver has to carry out.

The control is then passed from block 20 to the successive block 21.

Block 21 provides for tuning the next receivable station in the range of available frequencies; control passes to the successive block 22.

Block 22 is a test block; it controls whether the broadcasting station transmits a teletext service; in the affirmative case control passes to block 22a; in the negative case control passes to block 28; in all the test blocks the lower output corresponds to the YES output; the lateral output corresponds to the NO output.

Block 22a provides for identifying the special index page of the television programs; it obtains the numbers of the pages containing the information on the programs and stores them; control then passes to the successive block 23.

Block 23 provides for the acquisition of the current teletext page; control passes to the successive block 24.

Block 24 is a test block; it controls whether the acquired teletext page has not already been received; in the affirmative case (page not received) control passes to block 25; in the negative case (page already received) control passes to block 28.

Block 25 is a test block; it controls whether the acquired teletext page relates to the programming of the transmissions; in the affirmative case control passes to block 26; in the negative case control passes to block 28.

Block 26 provides for extracting the information from the acquired page and to store it in the memory 17; control passes to the successive block 27.

Block 27 provides for increasing the number of the current page; control passes back to block 23.

Block 28 is a test block; it controls whether the

tuned broadcasting station is the last of the frequencies to be explored; in the affirmative case control passes to block 29; in the negative case control passes back to block 21.

Block 29 is the end of function block; control can return to a block of the main program of the control unit 15, for instance the one in which the unit 15 carries out the reading of the keyboard of the command means 16.

From the description of figure 2 it results in being clear how the search and store function on the teletext pages of the information relative to the programming of television programs is carried out.

The information can advantageously be stored in the memory 17 under the form of a "database", i.e. under the form of a series of "records", each being relative to a determined television program. Every "record" could for instance be constituted of a fixed number of characters, for example 48; every "record" will be divided in a certain number of "fields", for example 5.

In the first field, to which for example 18 characters could be assigned, the title of the program will be contained; in the second field, to which for example 6 characters could be assigned, the type of program (film, sport, news, documentary, etc.) will be contained; in the third field, to which for example 15 characters could be assigned, the date and program starting time will be contained; in the fourth field, to which for example 5 characters could be assigned, the name of the broadcasting station of the program will be contained; finally in the fifth field, to which for example 4 characters could be assigned, the duration, expressed in minutes, will be contained.

For instance several records may result as the following:

How do they do that; documentary; 13/11/96 20,00; BBC 1; 50

Fat Ladies: Food in the wild; Variety; 13/11/96 20,30; BBC 2; 30

Last action hero; Film; 13/11/96 20,30; TV; 120
Wanted; variety; 13/11/96 20.30; Channel 4; 60

In figure 3 the block diagram of a second significant part of the logic flow according to the invention of the central unit of the receiver of figure 1 is represented.

Such flow corresponds to a selected part of the operative instructions contained in the memory 18.

The block indicated with the number 30 indicates the starting block of the logic flow relative to the search and display function of the "records" that the user wishes to consult from among those stored.

Control reaches block 30 after the user has sent a determined command signal for starting the search.

Control is passed from block 30 to the successive block 31.

Block 31 provides for asking the user the field of records to search; a message of the type: "Indicate the desired field number" is displayed on the screen and the

user then types the relative number; for instance if the desired field is that of the title the user will type the number 1; such number is stored and control passes to the successive block 32.

Block 32 is a test block; it controls whether the field number indicated is number 1; in the affirmative case control passes to block 33; in the negative case control passes to block 34.

Block 33 provides for asking the user the title of the records to be searched; a message of the type: "Indicate the title of the desired program" is displayed on the screen and the user will introduce such title by way of the keyboard according to one of the various systems known for sending alphanumeric data by way of a remote control unit to the central unit 15, such indication is stored and control passes to the successive block 40.

Block 34 is a test block; it controls whether the number of the field indicated is number 2; in the affirmative case control passes to block 35; in the negative case control passes to block 36.

Block 35 provides for asking the user the type of program to be searched; a message of the type: "Indicate the type of program desired" is displayed on the screen and the user will introduce the type of program desired; such indication is stored and control passes to the successive block 40.

Block 36 is a test block; it controls whether the field number indicated is 3; in the affirmative case control passes to block 37; in the negative case control passes to block 38.

Block 37 provides for asking the user the date and starting time of the program to be searched; a message of the type: "Indicate date and starting time of desired program" is displayed on the screen and the user will introduce the date and starting time of the desired program; such indication is stored and control passes to the successive block 40.

Block 38 is a test block; it controls whether the field number indicated is 4; in the affirmative case control passes to block 39; in the negative case control passes back to block 31.

Block 39 provides for asking the user the broadcasting station of the desired program to be searched; a message of the type: "Indicate the broadcasting station of the desired program" is displayed on the screen and the user will introduce the broadcasting station of the desired program; such indication is stored and control passes to the successive block 40.

Block 40 provides to make equal to 1 the number N of the record to be examined (current record) and to set to zero the number N1 of the displayed records; control then passes to block 41.

Block 41 provides for examining the field indicated of the record having the current number N; control passes to the successive block 42.

Block 42 is a test block; it controls whether the contents of the field indicated correspond to the text indicated by the user; in the affirmative case control passes

to block 43; in the negative case control passes back to block 49.

Block 43 provides for extracting the record examined and to display it on the screen; control passes to the successive block 44.

Block 44 provides for increasing by one unit the number N1 of the records displayed and passes the control to the successive block 45.

Block 45 is a test block; it controls whether the number N1 of the records displayed is greater than 15, i.e. the screen is full; in the affirmative case control passes to block 46; in the negative case control passes to block 49.

Block 46 provides for displaying a message of the type: "Press a key to continue" and passes the control to the successive block 47.

Block 47 is a test block; it controls whether the user has pressed any key on the keyboard; in the affirmative case control passes to block 48; in the negative case control passes back to block 47.

Block 48 provides for canceling the screen and setting to zero the number N1 of the records displayed; control passes to block 49.

Block 49 provides for increasing by one unit the number N of the current record; control passes to block 50.

Block 50 is a test block; it controls whether the number N of the current record is greater than the total number of records stored in the memory; in the affirmative case control passes to block 51; in the negative case control passes back to block 41.

Block 51 is the end of function block; control can go back to a block of the main program of the central unit 15, for instance the one in which the unit 15 carries out the reading of the keyboard of the command means 16, in particular to control whether a signal is sent which indicates to select a program from among those found in this way.

From the description of figure 3 it results in being clear how the search and display function of the record is carried out based on the commands sent by the user to the control unit 15 by way of command means 16. In particular how it is possible starting from data relative to the title of the program or to the type of program or the date and starting time or the desired broadcasting station to find one or more programs that are desired to be received.

From the given description the characteristics of the television signals receiver subject of the present invention result in being clear, as do its advantages.

In particular how it is possible to take advantage of such digital information, transmitted under the form of teletext pages, and being relative to television programs that can be received in a determined area, with the aim of having a program menu available starting from those on the air at the moment of consulting the menu itself and from this to select the program of interest to the user; or how it is possible to have available a data base

of the programs of the various broadcasting stations organised in fields, that can be explored by way of key words and in this way obtain the extraction from the data base of one or more programs of interest to the user. It is clear that numerous variants, apart from those described above, can be made to the television signals receiver subject of the present invention, without for this departing from the novelty principle inherent in the inventive idea, as it is also clear that in the practical embodiment of the invention the materials and forms of the illustrated details can be different, and the same can be substituted with technically equivalent elements.

Claims

1. Television signals receiver, comprising:

- at least a tuner device (11) for tuning upon choice one from the various television broadcasting stations receivable,
- a decoder (14) for receiving and decoding the digital signals inserted, during the vertical fly-back periods, in the received television signal,
- a central unit of control and digital processing (15), connected to the decoder also for analysing the received and decoded digital signals,
- command means (16) for allowing the user to send operative commands to said central unit (15),
- a first non volatile digital memory (17) for storing data, within which it is possible to store the tuning coordinates of a plurality of broadcasting stations, tying every broadcasting station with a "tuning program number" and
- a second non volatile digital memory (18) for storing operative instructions for the said central unit (15).

said receiver also comprising or being associated to:

- an image display device (13),
- a device for recording television programs,

characterised in that said second memory (18) contains instructions (figures 2 and 3) for causing said central unit to carry out a method of processing the said digital signals according to the following steps:

- a) upon verifying a determined event the said tuner (11) is commanded to tune into a first receivable broadcasting station,
- b) the relative received television signal is examined and it is determined whether it contains digital signals inserted in the vertical fly-back periods of the teletext type,
- c) in the affirmative case the digital signal of the teletext type is analysed and it is determined

whether in said signal a special page is available, identified by a predetermined code, within which information is contained for identifying the pages which contain standardised information on television programs,

d) in the affirmative case said pages are examined and the data contained in such is stored,

e) the tuner (11) is commanded to tune into a second receivable broadcasting station, and the previous steps b, c, d are repeated, therefore the tuner is commanded to tune into a third broadcasting station and so up till completion of all the receivable broadcasting stations available, or rather of all the broadcasting stations tied to a "tuning program number",

f) the information stored in this way, relative to the television programs provided by the broadcasting stations scanned according to the previous steps are analysed and classified, and

g) the receiver is pre-set to display on said display device (13), every time that a determined first key or button (M) comprised in said command means (16) is pressed, in particular said key or button which also serves to recall the receiver from the "stand-by" condition, a list of television programs made available by said broadcasting stations, listing them in order beside the relative "tuning program numbers", the co-ordinates of which have been stored in said first memory (17) as mentioned above.

2. Television signals receiver, according to claim 1, characterised in that said list contains the programs being transmitted the moment in which the said first key (M) is pressed.

3. Television signals receiver, according to claim 1, characterised in that said list is constituted as follows:

- in the first line the date and actual time is indicated;
- in each of the successive lines there are indicated, from left to right, respectively at least:
- the "tuning program number" associated to the broadcasting station,
- the starting time of the program,
- possibly the ending time of the program,
- the program title (figure 5).

4. Television signals receiver, according to claim 3, characterised in that the colour with which a line of the mentioned list is displayed depends upon the type of program to which it relates (red=film, yellow=sport, white=news, green=variety, etc.).

5. Television signals receiver, according to claim 4, characterised in that a cursor is displayed (small

flashing rectangle) that can be moved from line to line for selecting the relative program.

6. Television signals receiver, according to claim 3, characterised in that in every line of the mentioned list an indication is also comprised, in full or abbreviated, of the type of program (film, sport, news, various).

7. Television signals receiver, according to claims 3 or 6, characterised in that one of the lines of the list, or a part of which, flashes or is made particularly obvious, for indicating the selected program.

8. Television signals receiver, according to claim 6, characterised in that one of the lines of the list, or a part of which, is of a determined colour (red), for indicating the selected program.

9. Television signals receiver, according to one of the previous claims from 5 to 8, characterised in that for selecting from the list the line (program) desired, the user can use two appropriate keys comprised in said command means (16), distinguished by two arrows, one facing upwards and one facing downwards.

10. Television signals receiver, according to claim 2, characterised in that pressing one of two appropriate keys (arrow facing to the right or arrow facing to the left) comprised in said command means (16), a list of programs is displayed being successive to or respectively previous to those running in that moment.

11. Television signals receiver, according to claim 1, characterised in that pressing a second determined key (P) comprised in said command means (16), the program selected is tuned into and displayed, if it is running, while if it has not yet started, the receiver programs itself to tune into it and display it, in particular with a reasonable anticipation (for instance 5 minutes) from the programmed starting time.

12. Television signals receiver, according to claim 1, characterised in that pressing a third determined key (R) comprised in said command means (16), the receiver programs itself to tune into the program and record it, in particular with a reasonable anticipation (for instance 5 minutes) from the programmed starting time.

13. Television signals receiver, according to claim 9, characterised in that once, on the menu of running programs (figure 5), a determined program has been selected and that such selection is not changed within a determined time (for instance 3

seconds), the receiver provides for tuning into and displaying automatically the selected program without the necessity of pressing any keys.

tuner, which, unless the receiver is simultaneously being used for displaying a program and recording another, is utilised for the updating.

14. Television signals receiver, according to one of the previous claims, characterised in that the four arrow keys, comprised in said command means (16) when the receiver is displaying a television program, can serve to respectively change program by increasing (upward arrow) or decreasing (downward arrow) the "tuning program number" and to adjust the volume, reduce (left arrow) or increase (right arrow).
15. Television signals receiver, according to the previous claims, characterised in that when the list of programs is displayed the volume is set to zero (muting).
16. Television signals receiver, according to one of the previous claims, characterised in that when the data relative to a determined broadcasting station is not available in the memory, in the corresponding line, after the program number, the line remains empty, or an explanatory message of the situation is written ("Data not available").
17. Television signals receiver, according to one of the previous claims, characterised in that the receiver can be called from the "stand-by" condition, apart from pressing the said first key (M) also by pressing said second key (P) and in such a case a predetermined program (number 1) is directly tuned into and displayed.
18. Television signals receiver, according to one of the previous claims, characterised in that said command means comprise only 9 keys or buttons: said first key (M), said second key (P), said third key (R), the four arrow keys, the "stand-by" placing key and the "muting" key (figure 4).
19. Television signals receiver, according to one of the previous claims, characterised in that said central unit of control and processing (15) is programmed in a way so as to provide the updating of the memory with only the data relative to television programs relative to the broadcasting stations the coordinates of which have been stored in said first memory (17), repeating the operations of claim 1 at relatively brief determined intervals of time (for example 1 hour) when the receiver is in the "stand-by" condition or when it is in the normal functioning condition.
20. Television signals receiver, according to the previous claim, characterised in that so as to be able to carry out the updating operations of the data in the memory the receiver also comprises a second
21. Television signals receiver, according to claim 1, characterised in that the information relative to the programs, analysed and classified, is stored under the form of a series of "records" each containing various fields.
22. Television signals receiver, according to claim 12, characterised in that each of said "records" contains a given fixed number of "fields" in each of which a text or key is contained.
23. Televisions signals receiver, according to claim 22, characterised in that the central unit is arranged upon command to carry out searches, with access for all of the said "keys", and to carry out the relative display of the "records" containing the same.
24. Television signals receiver, according to claim 22, characterised in that all of said "records" contain at least the following "fields": title of the program, type of program, starting time, duration, broadcasting station.
25. Television signals receiver, according to claim 21, characterised in that all of said "fields" consist of a number of fixed characters.
26. Television signals receiver, according to claim 21, characterised in that all of said "fields" consist of a number of characters being different from field to field, but the same from record to record for the same field.
27. Television signals receiver, according to claim 21, characterised in that said method of processing of the digital signals contained in the vertical flyback periods is automatically carried out each time the appliance is switched on.
28. Television signals receiver, according to claim 21, characterised in that said method of processing of the digital signals contained in the vertical flyback periods is carried out on following a determined command sent by the user.
29. Television signals receiver, according to claim 22, characterised in that said second memory (18) contains instructions (figure 3) for causing said central unit to carry out, in following a determined command sent by the user, a method of searching and displaying the "records" that the user wishes to consult from among those stored, according to the following steps:

- a) the user is asked to indicate the text to be searched and the field of the records from where to search it;
- b) one record after another is examined in the indicated field and it is verified whether the text contained within corresponds to that being searched;
- c) records are displayed for which the correspondence has been verified.

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30. Television signals receiver, according to claim 29, characterised in that on the presented screen of records a cursor is available that the user can move in correspondence to the record desired, and that, pressing an appropriate key, the receiver can be programmed to operate based on the chosen program, on the indicated hour and on the indicated channel.

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31. Television signals receiver, according to claim 1, characterised in that said determined even is the connection/disconnection of part of the receiver to or from the mains supply.

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32. Television signals receiver, according to claim 1, characterised in that said special page, identified by a determined number is identified by a number containing a number being at least greater than 9.

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33. Television signals receiver, according to one of the previous claims, characterised in that said central unit of control and processing (15) is programmed so as to provide for the updating in the memory of the data relative to the television programs of all the receivable broadcasting stations, repeating the operations of claim 1 at relatively long intervals of time (for instance once a day).

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34. Television signals receiver, according to claim 11 or 12, characterised in that, when said second determined key (P) or said third determined key (R) is pressed, and the program selected has not yet started, and the V.P.S. code is present, the receiver programs itself to tune into it and display, or respectively record, it, using the relevant V.P.S. information in order to know exactly the starting and finishing time of the program.

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35. Television signals receiver, according to claim 11 or 12, characterised in that, when said second determined key (P) or said third determined key (R) is pressed, and it is forecasted that the program selected will be interrupted by a different program and then resumed, provision is made in order that the user can decide whether he or she wants that the selected program (container program) remains selected until the final end or until the interruption.

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36. Television signals receiver, according to claim 35, characterised in that, in the case that the program selected will be interrupted by a different program and then resumed, for selecting the possibility that the program remains selected until its final end a double pressing of a determined key (M,R,P) is provided.

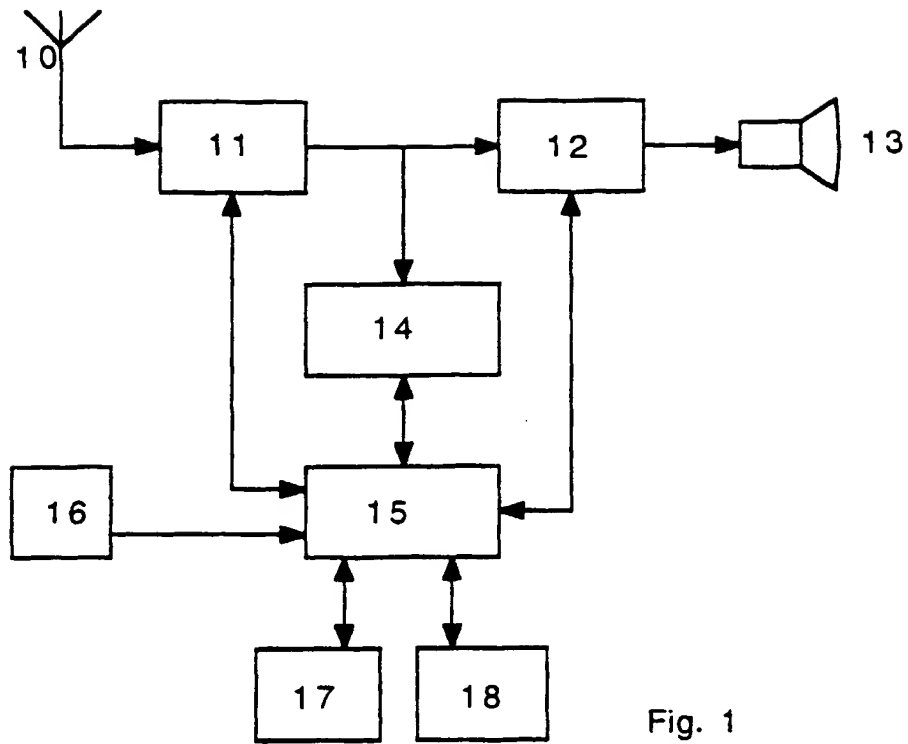


Fig. 1

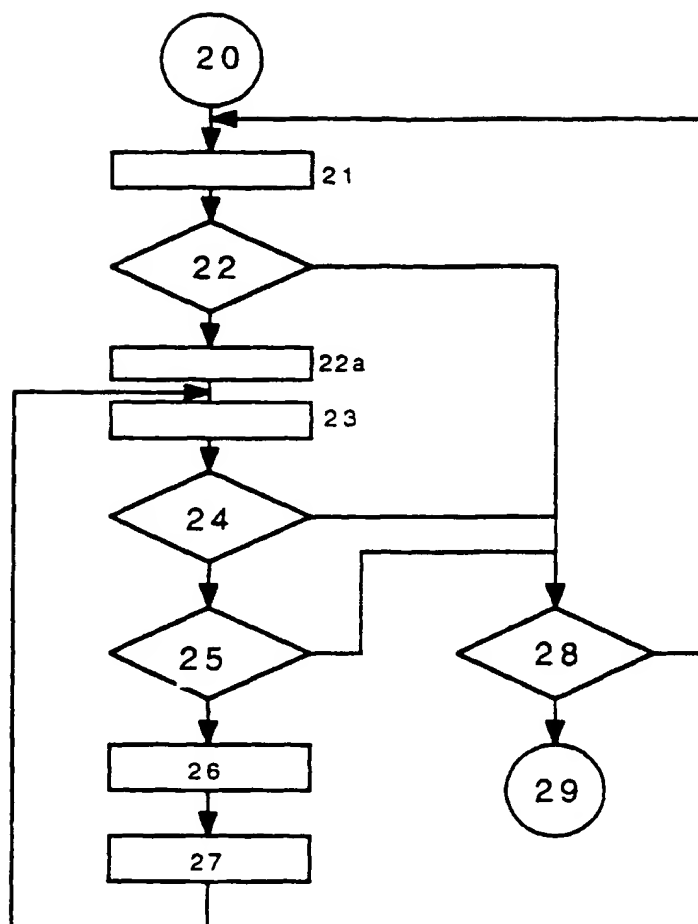


Fig. 2

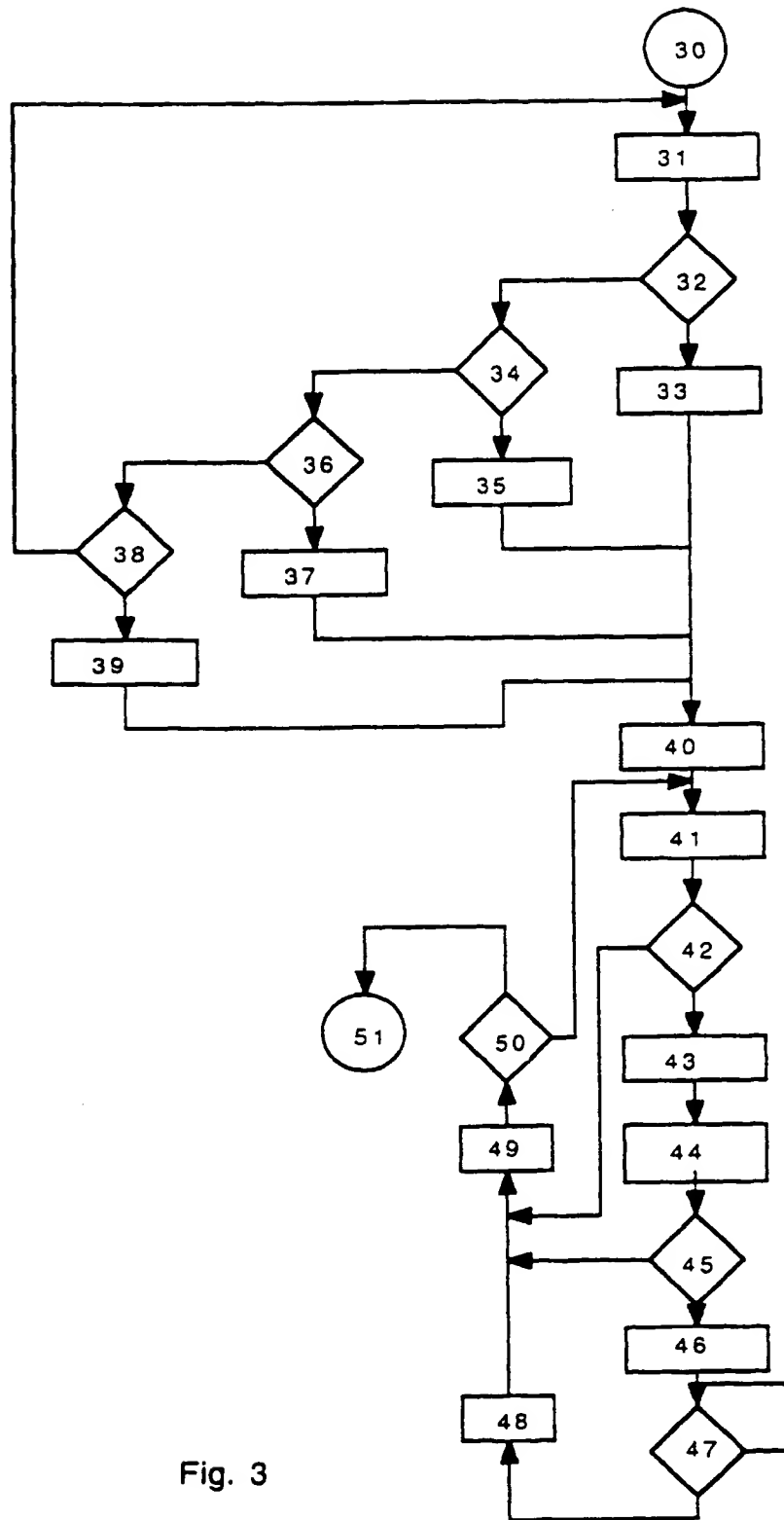


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

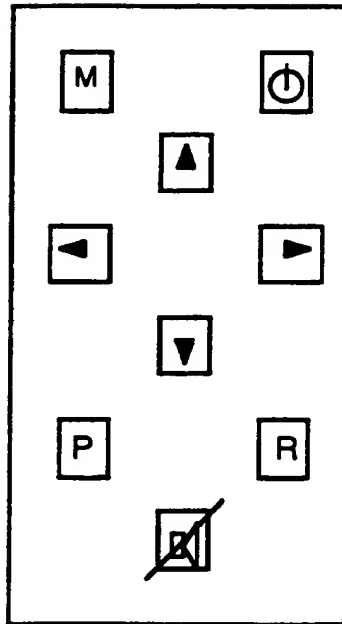


Fig. 5

WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 1996, TIME 20,45

⇒ 1	20,50 - 21,00	Points of View	(green)
2	20,30 - 21,00	Fat Ladies	(green)
3	20,30 - 22,30	Last Action Hero	(red)
4	20,30 - 21,30	Wanted	(green)
5	20,00 - 22,00	Outbreak	(red)
6	20,00 - 22,00	Fought Alone	(red)
7	20,00 - 21,30	Cricket	(yellow)
8	20,00 - 21,00	On Petrol	(green)
9	20,30 - 22,00	Rugby	(yellow)



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 96 12 0485

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
A	US 5 552 833 A (HENMI HIDEMI ET AL) 3 September 1996 * column 5, line 66 - column 8, line 62 * ---	1-36	H04N7/088
A	EP 0 503 070 A (MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC IND CO LTD) 16 September 1992 * claim 2 * ---	1-36	
A	EP 0 536 828 A (PHILIPS NV) 14 April 1993 * claim 2 * -----	20	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6) H04N
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 26 May 1997	Examiner Peeters, M
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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